

VZCZCXRO1592  
OO RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH  
DE RUEHOK #0128/01 1760354  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 240354Z JUN 08  
FM AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1129  
INFO RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 8259  
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 0226  
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA PRIORITY 2343  
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 0216  
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 0239

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 OSAKA KOBE 000128

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: JAPAN'S OPPOSITION DPJ USES RECRUITING SYSTEM  
TO BATTLE RULING LDP

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) is tapping young candidates recruited through its national headquarters to run against entrenched ruling-party lawmakers in the next parliamentary election. The process is sometimes a source of friction with local party chapters, which complain that recruits have strong resumes but no stomach for campaigning. Recruits can count on a \$7,000 monthly check, canned speeches and a DPJ mentor. But the party closely monitors its investment, and weak recruits run under the threat of losing their endorsement before election day. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Seeking insights into the DPJ's strategy ahead of Japan's next Lower House elections, post interviewed three first-time DPJ challengers in Osaka and Kobe: Kei Otani, a 37-year-old salaryman who graduated from party chief Ichiro Ozawa's "boot camp" for politicians; Koichi Mukoyama, a 51-year-old former city assemblyman; and Toshiro Ishii, the 37-year-old adopted son of a senior DPJ lawmaker. Their backgrounds underscored the evolving mix of candidate profiles in the DPJ recruits from the private sector, local lawmakers climbing the rungs of power and "all in the family" politicians. All three were recruited through the party's national headquarters.

¶3. (SBU) DPJ national headquarters recruits mainly to plug holes in districts that have been unable to find a viable candidate of their own. Applicants must write an essay and sweat through an interview with a senior DPJ politician. Passing the exam does not guarantee a shot at office, however. Recruits must win over the local party chapter, a process that is sometimes a source of friction. DPJ officials in Osaka told us that party headquarters was too easily impressed by a good-looking resume. Such candidates, they said, often lack the humility required to make stump speeches to morning commuters and to get along with local politicians.

¶4. (SBU) The DPJ's reliance on candidates recruited by party headquarters varies by region, Ishii said. Whereas the transient nature of Tokyo's population makes voters there more accepting of outsiders, in Osaka only two of the party's 16 Lower House contenders were chosen nationally. But in rural areas lacking a deep pool of talent, the number of recruits is relatively high.

¶5. (SBU) All DPJ candidates receive a generous monthly package of subsidies from party headquarters: 500,000 yen for campaign costs and 200,000 yen for personal expenses. A DPJ staffer said the package makes the party an attractive option for aspiring politicians

with no family connections. But he emphasized that candidates need to be able to raise money to have a shot at unseating an incumbent, estimating that neophytes can bring in up to 500,000 yen a month through fundraising activities.

16. (SBU) Though there is no field manual for new DPJ recruits, the party has a mentoring system. Ahead of the next Lower House race, each young DPJ politician has been assigned an incumbent Upper House politician as an advisor. Candidates also periodically receive canned speeches and policy guidance by e-mail. But party headquarters otherwise takes a surprisingly hands-off approach. Mukoyama said his campaign had been visited by senior officials from party headquarters only three times since May 2007 for face-to-face consultations.

17. (SBU) To be sure, DPJ headquarters closely monitors the return on its investment. It conducts district-by-district voter surveys, which Ishii said were unreliable because the sample sizes were as small as 500 respondents. Candidates must report monthly how many posters they put up, stump speeches they gave, and volunteers they enrolled. Mukoyama said he typically knocks on 200-300 doors per day and makes his pitch to commuters in the morning and evening. Those running a strong campaign can expect performance bonuses, while laggards could find themselves dropped by the party before election day. (Media reports have suggested the DPJ plans to replace a handful of candidates.)

OSAKA KOBE 00000128 002 OF 002

18. (SBU) Otani, a graduate of elite Tokyo University who worked for Sumitomo Corp. investing in U.S. startups, is a veteran of a "boot camp" for aspiring politicians run by Ozawa -- the Ozawa Seiji Juku, founded in 2003. Twice a year for two years, 20 to 30 participants attend four-day retreats where the DPJ chairman expounds his leadership philosophy. Otani said the course was not intended to provide practical advice for campaigning. Ishii described it as a shadow recruitment system Q- a way for Ozawa to discover new talent and build his support within the party. In any case, only two of its graduates have gone on to national office.

19. (SBU) Comment. Although the DPJ is widely associated with "public" recruiting of candidates Q an image it embraces to distinguish itself from the political dynasties of the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party the term is something of a misnomer. Our interlocutors said that local DPJ lawmakers have become the fastest-growing pool of recruits for national office. Still, the party has built a system that allows true outsiders like Otani to throw their hat in the ring, and the DPJ's push for power will depend in part on the success of its recruitment strategy. End comment.

RUSSEL